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Jessica R. Page

Ohio State University, Columbus OH

Email: [page.84@osu.edu](mailto:page.84@osu.edu)

225 Veterinary Medicine Academic Building

1900 Coffey Road

Columbus, OH 43210

Phone: 614-688-8474

Fax: 614-292-7476

Food and diet trends come and go. But the Slow Food movement (<http://slowfood.com>) endures, gaining even greater traction throughout the world in the past decade. Slow Food's staying power may be a product of its mission to promote good, clean, and fair food for all, integrating an appreciation for the pleasure to be found in food's flavors and culture with a sense of environmental and social responsibility (Slow Food, n.d.-f). By drawing attention to the environmental and economic effects of food production, this mission helps to counter accusations of elitism lobbed toward an organization that, early on, was considered by critics to be merely a gourmet dining club (Andrews, 2008, p. 45). By focusing on issues such as the working conditions of producers, and healthy food access for the poor, Slow Food remains relevant and attracts new members during a global recession.

Weismantel's (2004) "Society of the Quarter" feature about Slow Food, published in this journal, details the origin of the Slow Food movement, beginning with its founding in Italy in 1986 as a response to, and backlash against, the spread of U.S.-based fast food chains. Under the leadership of its charismatic founder and president, Carlo Petrini, Slow Food spread across Europe during the 1990s, focusing largely on gastronomy and local food traditions (Slow Food, n.d.-e). A U.S chapter commenced in 2000. The Slow Food International website drew greater international attention to the movement with its 2001 launch, marking the beginning of a period of growth of the Slow Food movement and expansion of its mission. As Slow Food has gained members and chapters worldwide, its members have carried out a range of projects connecting food to environmental responsibility, cultural preservation, and gustatory enjoyment.

Over the last decade, the Slow Food movement began to support a variety of new campaigns, many of which indicate a broader, more egalitarian movement than its earlier gastronomic emphasis suggested. Some of these programs focus on local production networks

and fair trade, consumer education, and connecting producers to consumers, while others emphasize biodiversity and environmental concerns. Continuing efforts emphasize the pleasure to be found in food, such as Slow Food's food and taste education initiative.

Slow Food membership is organized into a network of local chapters, or *convivia*. There are currently over 1,300 *convivia* in 153 countries (Slow Food, n.d.-g). The local, grassroots structure of the *convivia* allow them to implement the organization's mission in a way that resonates with the consumers and producers in their own unique communities. Local chapters are essential in meeting Slow Food's core ideal of connecting producers to consumers (Slow Food, n.d.-b). Petrini (2007, pp. 164-165) coined the term "co-producer" to describe those consumers wish to purchase food grown in economically fair, environmentally safe conditions. *Convivia* organize events that serve to introduce consumers to local producers and restaurateurs who specialize in locally-sourced ingredients.

Slow Food also addresses the co-producer concept at the international level by organizing a network of "Earth Markets," or Slow Food-approved farm markets. Earth Markets require farmers and producers to pay their employees a fair wage, require food products to come from within a local region, and provide educational opportunities for consumers. There are currently 21 Earth Markets worldwide. The latest Earth Market, and the first in the United States, is the Greenville Earth Market in Greenville, South Carolina, which was approved by Slow Food in September 2011 (Slow Food, n.d.-c). As with other Earth Markets, the Greenville Earth Market offers products that represent regional farming products and practices, including honey, vegetables, and meat from local breeds such as the Navajo Churro sheep, Pineywoods cattle, and Ossabaw Island hog (Slow Food, 2011).

Local convivia also are key in executing Slow Food's education mission, which seeks to educate adults and children about how food is produced and its production origins, as well as instilling an appreciation of food culture and flavors. Chapters in the U.S. currently reach out to their communities through Slow Food USA's \$5 Challenge, in which members share meals and recipes that require minimal equipment and cost no more than \$5 per serving (Slow Food USA, n.d.). This educational outreach program emphasizes the fact that food prepared at home, even with organic or local ingredients, can be cheaper than fast food. Slow Food provides Food and Sensory Education to adults and children, which includes chapter dinners, workshops, and events (Slow Food, n.d.-d). Food and Sensory Education for children varies according to locality, and includes collaboration with teachers and school boards to add food and nutrition to the curriculum, and the creation of school gardens (Slow Food, n.d.-d; Slow Food USA, 2010a).

The link between Slow Food's educational and environmental missions is the Ark of Taste program, part of its Foundation for Biodiversity. The Ark of Taste identifies, preserves, and shares knowledge of local food products from throughout the world by describing and indexing them in a searchable online database (Slow Food Foundation, n.d.-a). The aims of the Ark of Taste project are to support producers of crops or foods endemic to an area, and to preserve the biodiversity of our food stock by encouraging consumers to experience these unusual regional flavors (Slow Food Foundation, 1997). The Ark of Taste compiles information about more than 1000 foods from over 50 countries, since 1996 (Slow Food, n.d.-a). The U.S. instance of Ark of Taste includes over 200 foods, including native and heirloom plant and animal varieties and unique regional prepared foods and beverages (Slow Food USA, 2010b). Slow Food USA includes interesting descriptions of each food item, and descriptions of Ark products from throughout the world appear in fond detail in other Slow Food publications (see Heron,

Waters, & Slow Food Nation, 2008; Petrini, Watson, & Slow Food, 2001). These tributes to specific foods reflect Slow Food's gastronomic roots, and are made personal and accessible with links to markets, growers, and seed companies that supply the product. Visitors to the website ([http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/programs/details/ark\\_of\\_taste/](http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/programs/details/ark_of_taste/)) can lose themselves learning about the culture and history of food products as diverse as

- the buckeye chicken: the first chicken variety bred by a woman. This friendly, red-feathered fowl hunts mice and roars like a lion
- the pawpaw: the U.S.'s largest edible native fruit with creamy, tropical-flavored flesh and
- American rye whiskey: made with native rye as its primary grain. Traditional recipes and methods are at risk by the spread of genetically-modified and imported rye varieties (Slow Food USA, 2010b).

Slow Food accepts nominations from the public for new foods to be added to the Ark that meet all of the following criteria: Foods added to the Ark must be tasty, in danger of disappearing as a culinary tradition or plant or animal variety, sustainably produced, of historical or cultural interest, and generally produced on a small scale (Slow Food Foundation, n.d.-b).

Related to the Ark of Taste program is a large biodiversity project named Presidia. The members of the project are groups of farmers dedicated to producing a particular regional food product and establishing a market for it in a sustainable way (Slow Food, n.d.-a). In addition to providing some assurance of economic stability to farmers who grow the food products, inclusion of a product in Presidia guarantees the sustainable production, packaging, and transport of the product (Slow Food Foundation, n.d.-c). There are over 300 Presidia worldwide, involving over 10,000 small farmers and including foods as diverse as raw milk cheeses from the

U.S., the island of Ireland, and elsewhere; wine in jars from Georgia; saffron from Morocco and Austria; and Norwegian cured and smoked herring (Slow Food, n.d.-a; Slow Food Foundation, n.d.-d). Each Presidium includes a thorough description of the food item it protects, including the food's historical significance, its production area, and the Presidium's production techniques, as well as producers' contact information. As with Ark of Taste products, members of the public may nominate a candidate for Presidium inclusion.

One of Slow Food's goals is to empower producers of sustainable, local foods by bringing them together into a community of like-minded partners. They accomplish this with their Terra Madre network, which lets producers join with academics, cooks, consumers, and students (Slow Food, n.d.-h). Ongoing since 2004, Terra Madre convenes biennial international conferences that bring these groups together to teach, learn, and plan for the future of the Slow Food movement. In addition to the conferences, Terra Madre provides a framework for local "food communities" to share information and collaborate (Petrini, 2009, pp. 10-11). Terra Madre members can network and work together between conferences with aid from the organization's website (<http://www.terramadre.org>), which includes links to local and national meetings, information about ongoing projects, and a searchable database of producers, chefs, and academic members (Fondazione Terra Madre, n.d.).

Since Slow Food was first featured as a society of the quarter, its membership has increased from 65,000 to more than 100,000 and the organization has grown and spread worldwide. The organization has developed a strong Web presence that connects local producers and consumers and aids communication across a diverse international organization. Slow Food has maintained its focus on local food culture by empowering national and regional Slow Food organizations and local *convivia* to lead a wide variety of projects.

Slow Food's broad base of interconnected concerns--environmental, cultural, and aesthetic--have helped it become an established movement. This focus that combines environmental and social responsibility with the pleasure to be found in food has attracted concerned consumers while letting them experience new flavors, and may help Slow Food remain relevant to many into the future.

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